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MYTHOLOGY AS A WORK OF ART.

THE ancient world must always possess a charm for the poet, the scholar, and those minds that are enlightened by the elevating influences of a liberal education. The great events, the grand characters, and sublime productions of antiquity afford ample material for thought, study, or admiration. The spirit of patriotism finds in the pages of ancient life, actions on which the mind can dwell with rapture, while all the soul is kindled by the narrative. Philosophy can read with wonder the conversations of Socrates; wander at will with Plato in the groves of the Academy; or stand with the Stoics amidst the architectural beauties of the Portico. Fancy and taste can hear, with rapture, the grand tones of the Drama, swelling into wild sublimity with Æschylus;—beautiful in its artistic elegance with Sophocles;—or growing profoundly philosophic when moulded by the genius of Euripides. They can hang with admiration over the easel of Apelles, and behold the sublime results which followed the chisel of Phidias. Art, whether breathing from the canvas;—lifelike in the calm repose and sublime attitude of the chiselled marble;—speaking words of sublimity in the orator;—or revelling in the wealth of

language, as in poetry, presents in the ancient world charms more attractive than any it now possesses. But grand as were the events, sublime the actions, or beautiful the productions of these ancient days—yet as works of art, as true developments of Greek taste and feeling, they are far inferior to the national mythology; which, when we view it as the production of human genius and thought, stands pre-eminently alone. The magnificence of its design, and the grandeur of its execution, surpass even the splendid epics of the blind Mæonides; more perfect in the symmetry of its parts than the masterpieces of Phidias; and more truly artistic than the most elegant tragedy of Sophocles.

Three things must be considered in order to a proper appreciation of the ancient mythical system, and to enable us to appreciate its excellences and magnitude: 1, its object; 2, the manner in which that object was executed; 3, its adaptation to national feeling and sentiment.

1. The object of the Grecian Mythology was to present to the Greek mind a system, which would possess sufficient dignity to create that awe which can alone render religion venerable. The heart demands some object of religious reverence. There is an innate feeling in the breast of every man, that recognizes a belief in, and fear of some mysterious

power, to whom his supplications may arise and his praises be given. It was to supply this necessity that the beautiful and symmetrical structure of Greek Mythology was reared. It is neither our object nor our intention to enter into a long discussion concerning the significance of the ancient myths. We believe, and to us it constitutes one of their greatest charms, that all the mythological fables represent some truths but dimly seen, and vaguely apprehended by the ancient mind. We see in all the characters of myth, symbols of some hidden truth that existed in chaotic elements in the minds of men. Regarded in this light, mythology becomes one of the most interesting and philosophical of studies. When thus viewed intelligently, we can behold in it the embodiment of all the purer and more lofty feelings of humanity. The harmony and completeness of these symbolical tales, mark the gradual dawning of intellectual light upon the world, and clearly define the natural characteristics of the Hellenic tribes. When the ancient myths are thus regarded as types and symbols of some hidden truth, we have in the mythological characters exponents of an art, more profound than poetry, more elegant than painting, more forcible than sculpture, for in these myths the idea is idealized and refined. The grandeur of conception which is found in the poet, the painter, or the sculptor, is car-

ried to a point still more exalted and sublime. In the one, the mortal is employed in conceiving and embodying an idea pertaining to mortality; in the other, the mortal is engaged upon the infinite and undying. That the abstract symbol was afterward worshipped, instead of the loftier truth it represented, is undeniable. This, however, does not affect the position already taken in regard to the mythological fables, nor does it throw any discredit on the belief in their symbolical character. The ancient Magi worshipped the sun, for they saw in his genial rays, his radiant light, and glorious majesty, a fit type of the omnipotent and creative agency. But the fire-worshippers of more modern times have transferred their admiration from the god to his symbol, and to them, the sun by day and the moon by night are the objects of actual worship. If we do not regard the ancient myths as typical of some higher and nobler truth—then the ancient mythological system is resolved into the wildest fantasy ever created. Its worshippers are reduced to the condition of silly dupes, who lose all claim to superior enlightenment, and more lofty intellectual position. The charm is gone which gave interest to these highly beautiful and imaginative creations. From elegantly wrought and poetical combinations, they become mere superstitious tales, demanding no more reverence or attention than the ghostly legends which the Scottish grandmother tells of Thomas, the rhymers, and Michael Scott. But the contrary belief adds new charms to ancient art and ancient poetry; gives new sources of interest, and, like a wizard's wand, with a single touch converts the lifeless bones and antiquated relics, into forms breathing with life, and animated with beauty.

The object of the ancient Mythology was not to represent God as a unit; nor to combine in one person all the attributes and magnificence of an omnipotent and creative deity. The divine essence was distributed, the almighty power was divided among gods, who ruled in their respective courts, absolute monarchs of the elements over which they were called to reign. Thus we have the Olympic Jove, father of gods and men, wielding the hurling thunder, and presiding in calm and majestic dignity over the deliberations of the assembled gods. The venerable Neptune, fit representative of the elements, over which he was said to rule,

is represented as careering over the waves, and with his placid countenance rebuking their wild and turbulent uproar.

"Et alto

Prospiciens summa placidum caput extulit unda."

The dark Pluto presides over the gloomy courts of Hades, fit sovereign for such a realm; while Apollo, the generous patron of the Arts, guides the course of the genial sun. Every creature of the Almighty father has a fit representative in the ancient Myth, and all the wondrous legends of the fabulous ages, formed, as all such legends are, of a curious admixture of trash and error, are personated by individual deities. We have, therefore, as the object of the Greek Mythology, an attempt to produce a religious system, to supply the want of a superior power, the idea of whose existence in some form or forms, is an intuitive conviction of the human mind. Having no revelation by which to direct its efforts, it was forced to content itself with that truth, which, though partial and vague, it already possessed. To render this truth more attractive, and insure its adoption, it was clothed in all the magnificence of a religious ideal, and in all the beauty and sublimity of that natural poetry, which bursts spontaneously from the heart of man, when employed in contemplating subjects possessing, from their very nature, grandeur and sublimity.

We now come to the second head of the subject, viz.: the manner in which this object was attained. Human reason had never, before or since, such a grand theatre on which to act, nor such a grand subject on which to exert its powers. The actions and passions of men are at times sublime. The scenes through which life passes are often terrible, and worthy the labors of genius, which employs itself in recording or preserving, or at times in adorning and breathing its own inspiration upon them. All these labors, however, are bounded by the limits of reality and actual truth, beyond which they cannot pass. But genius in conceiving and embodying the idea of a national mythology was restrained by no limit. Here the Greek mind was dealing with a subject more than mortal. It was necessary therefore for mind to surpass itself; to rise superior to its normal state; to conceive and execute a conception, of which the idea and the substance were wholly foreign to the mind. In other words,

mortality was called on to create that which represented immortality; the finite and limited were required to represent the infinite and omnipotent. Beauty of design, and grandeur of development were two indispensable requisites to perfection and success. Harmony in the arrangement, and the unity of the whole were also required, for the object of this ancient system was to rear a religious structure, agreeing with the preconceived and intuitive convictions of mankind.

Every work of art presupposes the existence of an artist, and the question now naturally arises: who were the authors of this stupendous system? and to whom are the praise and honor of this magnificent design to be attributed? It certainly cannot be supposed that it was the work of one, or even of many men, combining their efforts at one time to produce such a result. Such a theory would presuppose the existence of men vastly superior to their contemporaries in point of intelligence and intellectual power. It would also resolve this creation of poetic imagery and symbol to the level of a religious fraud. Moreover, it is impossible to believe, that a system so founded could have prevailed so generally among all the classic nations of antiquity, and yet we know this to have been the case, and that the mythological system varied only in accordance with the distinctive national characteristics of the people among whom it existed. On the contrary, its foundations were laid deep in the human heart, and were composed of those fragmentary truths, which men still retained after the expulsion from Eden, and the dispersion of the race after the impious attempt upon the plains of Shinar. The builders who raised the superstructure on this foundation were innumerable. Not even the Egyptian Pharaohs, who, revelling in all the plenitude of pride and power, reared the stupendous pyramids, could boast as many workmen. Not one artist, or even many, sketched the plan; not even one generation completed the work; but ages passed, and the beautiful structure of Greek Mythology was still unfinished. But it was growing in beauty of design; in elegance of execution; in the symmetry of its parts, and like their own orders of architecture, stylobate and column, architrave and frieze, were being reared in harmonious proportions. Thus the whole nation, through a long series of years, was engaged in erecting a monu-

ment, at once the most artistic of ancient works, and the most admirable exponent of their own imaginative and poetical character.

Two difficulties had to be surmounted before the work was accomplished: First, the weakness of the human mind, which rendered it unfit to conceive such a grand whole; and secondly, the difficulty which was naturally attendant upon any attempt to make the offspring of a finite and limited intellect, rise to the dignity of a system accounting for the creations of an omnipotent and omniscient creator.

(I.) The first difficulty would have been insurmountable, had any direct attempt been made to create one individual, representing all the majesty and power attending absolute godship. This, however, was avoided by the multiplication of the divine essence, and the distribution among many of the powers too great to be vested in one individual. Therefore, gods were multiplied by gods, the divine existence was made to people all creation. The elementary powers were represented by symbolical characters. Nymphs sprang blushing from every crystal fount—river-gods dwelt on the pearly beds, and sported on the verdant banks of their native streams. Hairy dryads lived in every tree—wood nymphs, beloved by Pan, roamed through the shady dells, or reclined in the chosen retreats of their loved forests—while the dark recesses of the woods, and the gloomy caverns of the rocks, were inhabited by the wild satyrs. Thus, by multiplying the divine essence, they lessened the sense of its sublimity and infinitude, and reduced it more on a level, in accordance with the thoughts and feelings of humanity, and overcame the first difficulty. It is true, that they lost, by this method, the sublimity of the Christian system, and departed widely from the truth of revelation. But at this time no revelation had been granted. Christ was not then risen from the dead, nor were the heralds of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth, engaged in proclaiming the triune and awful God of Heaven. It is not to be expected, even of the greatest intellectual power, that it could grasp the simple grandeur of that system, which is only rendered intelligible to us by the revealed will of God. Moreover, it is not just to institute a comparison between any religious system and the truths of revelation, and to estimate the former by the standard contained in the latter. Art

refers to that which man has done by intellectual exertion; and it would be as unfair to estimate an artistic work by any but a mortal standard, as it would be unjust toward the sculptor to decry his marble effigy, because it lacked the breath, the coloring, and voluntary motion of life. We are now treating of mythology as a work of Art, and consequently are not liable to theological, but merely to æsthetic objections.

(II.) The second difficulty was more easily overcome when we consider the mythology as a system of symbols, reared on a foundation recognized and defined by all men. The idea was already given—it was the relic of that truth known to the patriarchs of old; modified, it is true, by the changes which it had undergone by its embodiment in traditional legends. Still, however, it possessed enough of the native force and power of truth, to obtain universal credence and assent. The work of human intelligence, therefore, was to embody the truth in forms of beauty and grandeur—to strain to the utmost all its powers in order to produce an adequate representation. This, though difficult in itself, was still possible, and far less difficult than the conception of the ideal. The ancients, therefore, symbolized every truth which was in their position. As we have already said, it is not possible in the brief limits of an essay like this, to discuss so vexed a question as the symbolical nature of the mythical tales. We firmly believe that all idolatry had its rise in this system of symbolical allusion. Truth was, undoubtedly, in the possession of the primitive fathers of the race. After the catastrophe of Babel, it was obscured and in some measure lost, but still, in a greater or less degree, it existed in the minds of all. As man retrograded more and more from perfection, this abstract truth gradually lost its living power, and without the coloring of imagination and the fascinations of mystery, would have been wholly disregarded and finally lost. Truth, therefore, was clothed in symbols, differing in their applicability and fitness, in accordance with the æsthetic character of the various nations. The rude and barbarous savage, who now worships the misshapen block, originally saw on its massive bulk, its rugged and undefined outlines, and unyielding strength, a dim representation of the vague idea he had conceived in reference to the Creator. Time passed on, the ideal

worship was gone, and the insensate block became the object of worship. Thus, too, it was with the elegant and accomplished Greek. He clothed the truth he possessed in all the imaginative beauty of his ideal, and like Narcissus glorying in his beauty, the Greek knelt, in adoration, before the abstract representation, without regard to the truth it connoted. This inclination to worship the image and desert the original, has been felt even in Christian communities. The images and relics of saints gradually become objects of religious reverence, and the fierce outbursts of the fanatical mob, the uncompromising feuds, and the desperate quarrels, which attended all the efforts of the Iconoclasts, prove at once the existence of the feeling which pre-disposes men to worship images as such, and the strong influence which it exerts over their minds. The boundary line between holy reverence and devout worship is almost imperceptible, and men are, unconsciously to themselves, much inclined to transgress it.

It is hardly necessary to instance examples of the beautiful and artistic manner in which the Greek interwove legendary truths in the mythological system. Two of these myths have always appeared to us exceedingly striking, viz.: the myth of Ceres, and the legend of Prometheus. The latter has been analyzed and most philosophically explained by the master mind of Coleridge, and we will glance, for a moment, at the beauties of the other. In this myth the goddess Ceres is represented as the protecting deity of the harvest, rendering the earth fruitful by the exercise of her divine power. She is said to have had one child called Proserpine, the common offspring of herself and Jupiter. This daughter was ravished by Pluto, and carried by him to the dismal courts of Hades. The outraged Ceres, pining for her daughter, refused its usual fertility to the earth. The world in consequence was threatened with a famine. But Jupiter interfering appeased the feelings of the injured Ceres, and decreed that Proserpine should remain six months of every year in the upper world with her mother. Upon this the earth resumed its usual fertility, and the danger was averted. In this myth we have the personification of seeding and harvest. Ceres represents the earth; Jupiter the superior and overruling powers of nature. These acting upon the earth or Ceres, produce the harvest typi-

fied by Proserpine. But the fruit of the combined action of earth and heaven is stolen by the infernal power—here is symbolized the planting of the seed in the earth, and its barren and bereaved condition in the winter months. But in the return of Proserpine to her mother for a portion of the year, we have represented the smiling harvests which annually cover the earth with their golden fruitage. Seedtime and harvest may not be the only objects typified. The sublime truths of revelation may be drawn without any inordinate stretch of the imagination from this ancient legend. To conceive of a fable more poetically beautiful and appropriate than this is hardly possible. The earth deprived of its fruits and harvest is represented as a mother mourning the loss of her child; and when all the earth is smiling with the abundant harvest, she is pictured as the happy mother rejoicing in her offspring. But beautiful as this simple legend is, there are other types of more lofty truths, and consequently possessing greater sublimity and grandeur.

There seems to have been no limit to the lavish expenditure of poetical beauty upon these imaginative creations. Greek genius in these, as indeed in all other developments, seems to have been inspired by its subject, and to have risen in sublimity of thought, and excellence of execution, with the object it was called on to conceive or execute. Yet with all this exuberance of imagination, and fruitful creative power, the works of Greek genius were chaste and elegant. The gorgeous picturings of the East, revelling in all the splendors of Oriental diction, the wreathed trellis work of Indian philosophy, find no place in Grecian masterpieces. No splendid hall of Eblis, with its heaps of massive wealth, its gates of burnished gold, its walls resplendent with diamonds, and flashing with the gems of Golconda; or its miserable inhabitants, burning with inward flames amidst all this mockery of voluptuous wealth, was ever imagined by the Grecian mind. The halls of Valhalla, with their long tables groaning with the feast, and the yellow-haired heroes quaffing their mead, and entering on their deadly sports, was a conception totally foreign to the Greek. All was elegantly and purely chaste. Art was theirs in the highest degree; not the *artificial*, with its attempts at display—and its gaudy charms to attract and dazzle; but an intellectual, a soul-refining Art, which

revealed the admirable and the sublime in everything that it attempted, but was not itself revealed or perceptible.

There were several very remarkable features, connected with the whole system of Greek Mythology, which must be mentioned, as illustrating the subtle and refining genius displayed in its creation. (1.) The gods had not absolute control over the future, nor did they even possess sufficient power to accomplish their own cherished schemes. This belief is often noticed by both the Greek and Roman poets, when dealing with the siege of Troy. Hera, wife of Jove as she was, could not destroy the Trojan fleet, nor prevent the sad catastrophe of Dido's fate. The gods were at war on the Trojan question, and the king of Heaven himself was strongly suspected, like a true son of Adam, of espousing the cause of those whom his royal spouse most cordially detested. But the point in question needs no proof, every scholar, ay, every schoolboy, knows that the gods were controlled by, and not controllers of, the unknown future. Here the objection would naturally arise to the system, that this was a great defect in conception. It made God not God, for it deprived Divinity of its omnipotence, and while holding it up for reverence, removed one of the greatest sources of veneration. But the Greek had the same intuitive conviction of absolute power being a necessary element to godship, as the objector to the system, that we ourselves possess. The defect really had no existence, for they embodied as a constituent portion of their creed the idea of the Fates. Of the nature, character, or origin of these mysterious agencies, little seems either to have been imagined or presented to the people, but they are said by Æschylus, to be the omnipotent powers before whose stern and irresistible decrees all, both gods and men, must bow in submission.

A still more remarkable element in their belief was the idea they entertained in regard to the eternal existence of their gods. They imagined that they were evolved in time, and not its creators. This phenomenon in their system can only be explained as a defect which necessarily arose from the nature of the human mind, which was unable to grasp the sublime ideas of Space and Time. It can be referred to the same cause which led to the multiplication of gods. Thus they had god dethroning god *in time*; and

gods ruling over different portions of space.

We could mention other peculiarities, but it is needless here to dwell upon the singularities of the system. It is sufficient to say, that all objections that can be raised to the harmony of the system as a work of art, may be referred to the weak and limited nature of man's intellect. They were not blemishes in the system viewed æsthetically, for art refers to that which it is in the power of man to execute, and like all other attempts of mortals, cannot reach perfection, but is the more admirable, as it the more nearly approximates to the truth. To the works of God alone, can we look for complete harmony and excellence. If we expect to find them in the attempts of man, we but prepare our minds for disappointment, and lessen that delight we would otherwise experience.

We have thus determined that the mythological system was a structure reared on the basis of partial truth. That it was allegorical in its nature. That it had for its artist a nation whose work was unaccomplished through ages. That it rose not like the stately palace in Pandemonium—

"Like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,"

but was the slow and gradual creation of time and labor,

"Built like a temple, whose pilasters round
Were set; and Doric pillar overlaid
With golden architrave: nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculpture graven.
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon,
Nor great Al Cairo, such magnificence
Equalled in all their glories to enshrine
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury."

Such was the manner in which this magnificent work was executed. Thus did the Greek attain the object of his mythological system. It now remains to speak of its adaptation to national feeling and sentiment.

The Greek mind was truly artistic—this tendency is shown in all the wondrous productions which Greek genius has left to perpetuate its fame or adorn its annals.

In Athens, where all the aspirations of the nation were fulfilled: where the ambition of the great had a theatre; where all the arts found patronage and encouragement, there artistic feeling is plainly

visible. The accomplished and versatile Athenian was always ready to hear "some new thing;" always generous patrons of the arts, and admirable critics of artistic excellence. No city that ever was reared in all the splendor of wealth and power, exhibited such a liberal and munificent appreciation of intellectual effort. It was here that the Greek Drama, the most admirable of all the wide range of Greek literature, first courted the tragic muse. Here Æschylus lived, and Sophocles wrote. It was in her streets that Aristophanes prepared his comedies. It was here that Demosthenes harangued, and Socrates discoursed. It was in the groves of her Academy that Plato taught; on her porticoes that Zeno promulgated his doctrines. It was from her harbors that the fleet of Salamis went forth. It was here that Pericles ruled, and Aspasia lived. Athens was then the home of the artist, even as now it is the shrine of the scholar. The learned, the wise, the philosopher, and the statesman, the artist, and the warrior, crowded within its walls, finding sympathy and encouragement among its citizens. Art in all its varied forms, whether for ornament or use, was fostered and supported by no niggard hand. The drama was an amusement protected and sustained by legal power and public appropriation. Prizes for poetry, for painting, and for sculpture, were given from the public treasury, and all the citizens vied with each other in their attempts to develop and encourage the liberal arts.

The Greeks were an intellectual people. It was not merely with the educated that Socrates conversed in the streets of Athens. The very beggar, in his rags, sought to hear the wisdom of the philosopher. The paintings of Apelles were not executed merely for a small circle of connoisseurs and artists, but for Greek citizens everywhere who appreciated and admired his grand conceptions. Plato was followed to the shady retreats of the Academy, not by the philosophical alone; but by the whole city, without reference to their education and manner of life. Demosthenes did not speak to a gaping and amazed crowd, who in listening wonder stood and were electrified; but he addressed a refined and intellectual audience, who were able to criticise and appreciate his masculine eloquence.

Greek life, as developed in Athens, was the most singular and unique that has

ever been presented. Philosophy taught in the streets; orators made the *Agora* re-echo with the burning language of which the Greek tongue alone is capable; artists hung their magnificent paintings in places of public resort; statues and busts, by Phidias, stood exposed in the public gardens; the great works of the greatest tragic minds were exhibited on the stage; every man was a legislator; war, politics, or art alike, offered certain roads to distinction—all that art could effect, or human genius plan, was present to the eye and melodious to the ear.

For a nation who lived such an eminently æsthetic life, it was necessary that a religious system, eminently beautiful and artistic, should be created. The elegant Athenian would have shrunk in horror from the degrading rites and horrible ceremonies of the Eastern nations; his humanity would have revolted from the sacrifice of human life, and all his nobler and purer nature would have revolted from a grovelling and sensual system. We find in the Greek mythology no disagreement with Grecian feeling—this indeed could not have happened, for the Greeks themselves were the designers and architects, and constructed their religion as their nature prompted. The wild and poetical character of the mythical tale, the harmony and completeness of the mythological system, accorded with their imaginative feelings. They were charmed by the beauty of the allegories; their poets and painters seized with the quickest of genius upon its beauties, and developed in their sublime strains and animated paintings, the feelings with which the Greek mind regarded its religion.

We are inclined to think that one great cause of the alleged superiority of the ancient over the modern poets, arose from the divine machinery which he of antiquity was enabled to introduce. The ancient poet had at his command a world of superior beings, whose introduction stimulated the grandeur of the thought, and enhanced the sublimity of the action. The great power the ancient poets derived from this source is evident in the *Iliad*; in that poem Homer treats of a subject possessing deep and lasting interest to the Greek mind. But the recital of conflict, and the martial deeds of heroes would grow monotonous were it not for the interference of the gods. The poet presents to the mind of his reader the courts of

Olympus, and the grave deliberations of the counselling gods. In the drama its power is still more marked: in the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, the decrees of the fates, and the cruel prophecies of Apollo, seem to be living and indispensable poetic agents in the hands of the tragedian. In the *Prometheus Venitus*, the same divine agency is employed in a manner equally appropriate, conveying with it, however, a far grander tragic effect, on account of the much greater sublimity of character introduced. In one word, we can say that the *Prometheus* is the most sublimely grand of all dramatic conceptions, and that it derives its chief excellence from the legend of which it is but the incarnation in poetic form. The "*Deus ex Machina*" is always at hand to relieve the plot from all difficulties, and to reconcile all contrarieties, nor does such intervention seem abrupt, but it is natural, and the mere harmonious result of the whole system of mythology. It may indeed be urged that this same agency is in the power of the moderns—this we will admit. We grant, indeed, that he has the old mythical names at his disposal, and can bring, if he is so inclined, all the Olympians upon the stage, provided the manager does not object to such a multiplication of characters. But he can only introduce the names: the *belief* that gave them power, divinity, and reverence is flown,—they are lifeless, and consequently would be useless agents in the modern drama. Popular feeling would revolt against, and condemn such use as absurd and frivolous, and the author could gain nothing by representing all men governed by the decrees of Apollo, or the nod of Jupiter.

The Christian system, from its very constitution, is unfit for such use. It is of too pure, too lofty a character to be degraded to the purposes of scenic representation. Our conceptions of heaven—of hell—of God, and all the magnificence of that God's attributes, are unutterable, and wholly disqualify the Christian religion for dramatic purposes. The same conception of ineffable sublimity is an impracticable obstacle to its introduction in all, except sacred and epic poetry, and even in the latter, unless, like Milton, the poet chooses some subject worthy of the theme, and possesses the tremendous Miltonic power, he will fail in attaining the grandeur which such subjects demand. To the Greek, however, the gods of

mythology were in perfect consonance with his own state of feeling. He could easily form a conception of their nature, and with equal facility embody that conception. In addition to all this, the mythical system was a vast storehouse of poetic imagery and fable, from which subject after subject, admirably qualified for and adapted to poetic development, could be obtained by those who sought to gain access to the courts of Parnassus.

To the Greek, as an artist, the mythological system was most admirably adapted—for all an artist's love for the beautiful was kindled by the poetical legends—the adaptation of the type to the subject represented, and the complete harmony of the whole system. The artist's passion for the sublime could here find ample matter for contemplation; he could, by imagination, transport himself to Olympus, where Jupiter, surrounded by the gods, sat in quiet majesty; or again, when the enraged deity wielded the rolling thunder, or directed the flight of the flashing lightning. He could transport himself to Hades and the banks of the gloomy Styx, where the wailings of the disembodied spirits added new horrors to the scene; or in fancy, he could stand in the dread courts of Rhadamanthus, and hear pronounced the awful and eternal sentence from the same lips, that bound Ixion struggling to the wheel, and condemned Prometheus to the rocks of Caucasus. Of the sublimity of horror, he could find ample matter in the realms of myth. Or if with a lighter spirit he sought objects of beauty on which to delight his fancy, he could turn to the courts of Venus, where the Paphian dame, in all the joyousness of her beauty, ravished the hearts of the spectators with her matchless charms. He could plunge deep in the recesses of old ocean, and behold Nereid and Sea-nymph sporting amidst the coral and the pearl with which the bottom of the mighty deep is so richly strewn. He could call Diana from her mountain heights; and as the graceful huntress came with her attending troop of damsels and nymphs, his desire for beauty would be gratified. Sublimity was in every thought; beauty in every character connected with his religion.

Nor in an intellectual point of view was the system at all deficient in sources of interest. The subtleties of the myth engaged the mind by the elegant adaptation of the type to the subject represented.

The orator studied them, for his boldest flights of eloquence, his grandest metaphors, were to be drawn from this world of symbols. The poet employed, the sculptor embodied, the artist painted these conceptions of mythology; the dramatist interwove them in all his tragedies, while the people applauded all that was done. Their own works, the monuments they have left behind them of their national existence, are the best witnesses of the adaptation of the mythology, to national feeling and sentiment. The gods and the people are in the works of the latter indissolubly connected, showing clearly that the system was a harmonious development of the national mind. The noblest productions of Greek art seem to have been inspired by the mythology. The Minerva of Phidias, the Jupiter Ammon, and many others, draw their silent majesty, and grandeur of idea, from the conception the sculptor entertained of the greatness of his subject.

We have already spoken of the versatility and power of the Greek genius, and dwelt upon its adaptation to art; not the gorgeous imagery and splendid creations of the East—not the dark mysticism of Central Europe, nor the fantastic creations of India—but an art fostered by liberal influences, and restrained by a chastened and elegant taste. Nations have risen; empires have flourished, decayed and fallen, and all the splendid energies of Rome and Asia have been exerted to achieve great results in the world of art. Europe, too, has sprung forth upon the stage of empires, the new offspring of civilization and purified religion, yet all their varied powers have failed to rear such splendid creations in the realms of imaginative beauty. To the most elegant and admirable achievements of this people, so illustrious in all æsthetic developments, we must turn to behold the grandest work of art. As the God is superior to his temple, as the living man is more admirable than the marble effigy, so much, in an artistic point of view, was the Grecian mythology superior to every other production of the Greek mind. Or, to comprehend our meaning in a sentence, mythology represented God, while Greek art represented mythology. H. P. R.

A MERCHANT'S LIBERALITY.—The following was handed to us by a gentleman who vouches for its truth: "Not many

months since, an artist—widely known for his vigorous and truly American delineations, his warm heart and genial qualities—lay on his death-bed, his last moments embittered by the thought that, although he had followed his art with a devotion sublime in its faith and trust, yet he would leave a family unprovided for, and illy prepared to struggle with the world. Thus harassed he passed away. Before the partner of his joys and sorrows recovered from the first crushing dart of the black-winged messenger, she looked around her little household, and found not even enough to enable her to consign the loved remnants to the common home of us all. Overwhelmed by this new and terrible grief, the young widow, brought up in luxury, clasped her hands in terrible apathy, and refused to be comforted. Yet, aid was at hand, and in a manner of which she did not dream. A young merchant of this city, who had accumulated a fortune while yet on the sunny side of thirty, heard, by chance, of her distress; and, loving art as a great humanizer and refiner, sent a hundred-dollar bill to her, 'as a slight tribute of memory to one whom he had loved well while on earth.' Nor did he stop here. Searching for the dead artist's random sketches in the print-shops and in odd corners, he was led to an 'artists' colorman,' on the east side of the city, where he found a number of subjects on bits of canvas, which the artist had deposited during the last year of his life in payment for a small bill of sixty dollars. The merchant, with the aid of two congenial spirits, had these framed, touched here and there by an appreciative hand, and at the sale of the painter's pictures, two weeks after, these securities, for the petty sum above-mentioned, brought two thousand dollars! Brother artists, with their proverbial catholicity of feeling, added their mite, which—aided by judicious advertising, and the liberality of Mr. Leeds, the auctioneer, who gave his services as a free offering—netted the widowed and the fatherless the handsome sum of five thousand dollars. Is it not refreshing, in the midst of the numerous instances of hard-fisted avarice among our men of money, to single out one among them who uses, and not abuses, his abundant means? If the truth were told, it would be found that our wealthy men would give oftener than they do, could they find time to search out proper recipients for their bounty."